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SUBJECT: HAITI: GREECE SEEKING TO PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND
RESETTLE ORPHANS

REF: STATE 6918

¶1. Greek Deputy Foreign Minister Spyros Kouvelis convoked Ambassador Speckhard January 25 to explain Greece's increasing frustration with not getting a Greek humanitarian flight expeditiously into Haiti, and the political fallout this was having for the new government in the Greek media and among the public. Kouvelis sought assurances that the February 8 date assigned to the Greek 747 humanitarian flight by the Haiti Operations Coordination Center was firm; the ambassador reassured Kouvelis that we would work to make that happen. Kouvelis stressed that Greece wanted to be responsive, that the shipment represented a bold new effort at private-public partnership and that the Greek government was trying to encourage more Greek citizens to participate in such efforts and to help strengthen a weak Greek civil society in the process.

¶2. The Minister said that as a result of the changing needs on the ground, Greece would drop its SAR component and send about 50 tons of humanitarian and medical assistance along with 80 medical personnel. He added that Greece plans to work with UNICEF to evacuate up to 300 Haitian orphans for adoption in Greece, which would be facilitated by the Greek Orthodox Church. The ambassador cautioned that all international conventions must be followed to allow the transportation and eventual adoption of the Haitian orphans, and promised to provide Kouvelis' staff with information that should help Greece to navigate the international legal process. Kouvelis said Greece stands ready to assist in any way deemed critical by the United Nations or Haitian authorities.

¶3. Separately, the ambassador delivered reftel demarche points to Kouvelis, underscoring that U.S. relief and recovery efforts are at the request of the Haitian government. Both the ambassador and DCM also made similar statements to the Greek media January 22, which were reportedly factually in weekend newspapers.
Speckhard